

Increase Control, Reduce Child Anxiety – A Quick Drawing Exercise

Having some control over the outcomes of situations in life affects levels of anxiety. For example, if your child has some control over the grade on their next test, this can translate to less anxiety. This might seem obvious, but here's the thing that's not apparent... just *believing* in the ability to control the outcome of an event or situation—[perceived control](#)—affects anxiety.

Perceived control also influences a child's academic success. In groundbreaking [research](#), world-renowned motivation expert, Carol Dweck Ph.D., found that kids who believe their mind is a muscle that can grow or, in essence, *perceive* to have some *control* over their intelligence benefit in various ways.

These “growth mindset” children take on more challenges, bounce back quicker from setbacks, stretch themselves toward goals, have greater motivation to learn, and achieve more academically. This is in comparison to those with a “fixed mindset” who believe their abilities are set in stone.

Bolstering your child's perceived control can be as simple as this exercise below.

Ask your child to draw a picture of themselves on a sheet of paper and then draw a bubble around their image. Next, ask them to write out all the things they feel they cannot control outside of the bubble. Then, have them write all of the things they do have control over inside the bubble.



Work with your child to come up with a long list of things they have some or full control of in their life. For example, inside the bubble, your child might write in things like this: my hobbies, time doing homework, what I eat, who I spend time with, what music I listen to, what clothes I wear, my relaxation exercises etc.

The goal is to fill up the inside bubble and then to ask your child to focus on improving what's in their control. Ask them what actions they can take to influence everything inside the bubble. This is also a great discussion exercise to learn what your child *feels* they have control over.

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